DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 745 PS 011 480

AUTHOR Hanley, Patricia; Swick, Kevin J.
TITLE State Leadership in Early Childhood Education: A 1980 Status Report.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Certification; Comparative Analysis; *Early Childhood Education; Educational Philosophy; Educational Policy; Models; Program Evaluation; Questionnaires; *State Curriculum Guides; *State Departments of Education; *State Norms; *State Programs

ABSTRACT

In January, 1980, a questionnaire on the status of early childhood programs was mailed to the chief state school official in each state. Every official was asked to have the appropriate person complete the questionnaire. By April 20, 1980, after one follow-up letter, 44 questionnaires had been returned. Three themes comprised the information sought: general information, personnel commitment, and available accommodations. Findings indicated that 26% of these State Departments of Education (SDE) have a division of early childhood education, 58% do not, and 16% did not provide information. 52% have a written philosophy of early childhood education, 26% do not, and 22% did not provide information. 10% have an early childhood education model, 78% do not, and 12% did not provide information. 42% have evaluation procedures, 44% do not, and 14% provided no information. The majority of SDE provide certification guidelines, curriculum specialists for inservice training, financial assistance for attending conferences, and written curriculum materials. It was suggested from an analysis of results that the institutionalization of early childhood education has increased in SDE since 1976, and that many states appear to concentrate on education of exceptional preschool children and their parents. (Author/DB)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED188745

# STATE LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A 1980 STATUS REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Patricia Hanley
Kevin J. Swick
Early Childhood Education
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kevin J. Swick
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The need for leadership in early childhood education* at the state level was cited in a survey study of the fifty state departments of education in 1976 (Swick). After analyzing the data gathered in the study, Swick noted the status of leadership at the state level was at best static, confused, and "in many states lacking in substance" (1976). Not only have the problems faced by young children and their families increased since 1976, but major efforts to reduce local, state and federal funding of early childhood education programs have increased.

The question that is often asked is what is the status of young children and their parents as we enter the 1980's. Answers to this question are certainly varied but none are very positive. Visible and subtle cases of child abuse/neglect are rising faster than the economic inflation rate. The number of families where both parents must work outside the home to meet family needs is increasing each year. The percentage of families where some form of dissolution (divorce, separation, and/or death) occurs is on the rise. The

PS011480

*Early childhood education, for the purposes of this report, is defined as encompassing home and/or school based programs or projects for children and/or parents of children from birth until entrance into first grade.

incidence of child abuse, divorce, illness, and economic hardship takes place more during the early childhood years than at any other stage of family development. Yet, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) points out, it is during this early period of life that children and parents receive the least help. The need, then, for dynamic leadership at all levels of education is especially urgent when the needs of children and families are addressed.

While many people look to the federal government for answers to these problems, history clearly indicates that effective educational endeavors are best initiated and operated by local and state units of government. The purpose of this study was to find out what leaders in state departments of education were doing to meet the needs of young children and their parents. Since recent research findings indicate "preventive" educational, social, medical, and economic programs during the early childhood years have the greatest effect on later human functioning, the results of this study have tremendous importance for all members of the society (Lazar, 1976; Gotts, 1980).

Nature of the Survey

The chief state school official of all fifty states was mailed a questionnaire on the status of early childhood program and projects in their state. They were asked to have the appropriate person complete the questionnaire and return it by mail as soon as possible. In addition, they were encouraged to include any supplemental information that would help us acquire a comprehensive picture of their efforts in developing early childhood education programs. The questionnaire was mailed in January of 1980. As of April 20, 1980, 44 of the state departments of education had completed and returned the questionnaire.

Substance of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was organized around three themes: general information, personnel committment, and available accommodations.

Under the general information section respondents were asked to answer questions related to: (1) existence of a division of early childhood education in their state department, (2) existence of a written philosophy of early childhood education, (3) availability of any mandated guidelines for early childhood programs, (4) existence of a specific model for programs to follow, (5) the occurrence of evaluation of local early childhood programs, and (6) existence of state certification for early childhood education professionals.

The personnel committment section asked respondents to: (1) identify the existence of personnel who were specifically assigned to assist local school-community groups in designing and maintaining programs, (2) clarify their status of working with universities in terms of research and development projects related to early childhood, (4) explain any past studies of research relative to early childhood education in their state, and (5) identify any conference which the respondent regularly attends related to their professional development.

In terms of available accommodations respondents were asked to (1) identify funding which was used to assist local districts in operating early childhood programs, (2) explain how local districts allocate funds for early childhood programs, and (3) to identify what curriculum materials are provided to public schools for their use in developing and/or improving their early childhood education efforts.

## Findings of the Study

The chief state school official in each of the fifty states was mailed a Survey of the Early Childhood Programs and Projects of State Departments of Education (the Survey). The Survey was to be completed by the person designated to represent early childhood education (ECE) programs and projects. On the first mailing of the Survey, 37 states responded. A follow-up letter was sent to the remaining 13 state departments of education (SDE) with a second copy of the Survey. As a result of the initial request and the follow-up request, 88% of the states responded by completing and returning the Survey.

General Information. Twenty-six percent of the SDE reported having a specifically designated division of early childhood education. There was no division of ECE in 58% of the SDE; 4% did not respond to this item; and 12% failed to return the Survey. (See Table 1 for a summary of the responses in this section.).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

A written philosophy of early childhood education exists in 52% of the SDE. Twenty-six percent report that there is no written philosophy; 10% did not respond to the item; and 12% did not return the Survey. Many SDE report the existence of mandated guidelines for ECE programs: 58% have mandated guidelines; 24% do not have any mandated guidelines; 6% did not respond to this question; and 12% did not return the Survey.

Only 10% of the SDE had a specific model for ECE programs to follow; 78% had no model; and 12% did not complete and return the Survey. Evaluation procedures for local ECE programs were reported by 42% of the states. There was no evaluation procedure in 44% of the states; 2% did not respond to this item; and 12% did not return the Survey.

Table 1 - General Information*

| Categories | Responses Yes | No | Abstained | Failed to Return Survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item 1.1- Division of ECE | 13 | 29 | 2 | 6 |
| Item 1.2- Written Philosophy | 26 | 13 | 5 | 6 |
| Item 1.3- Mandated Guidelines | 29 | 12 | 3 | 6 |
| Item 1.4- ECE Model | 5 | 39 | 0 | 6 |
| Item 1.5- Evaluation of local Programs | 21 | 22 | 1 | 6 |
| Item 1.6- Certification Requirements | 30 | 11 | 3 | 6 |

*As reported by number of states

More than half of the states, 60%, have established certification guidelines for professionals in ECE; 22% do not have any certification requirements as of the writing of this study; 6% failed to respond to the item; and 12% did not complete and return the Survey.

Personnel Commitment. The SDE reported that in 66% of the cases, curriculum specialists in ECE were provided to aid school districts to develop ECE programs and to provide inservice education. Ten percent, however, reported there was no curriculum specialist in ECE. Two percent failed to respond to that item and 12% did not return the Survey. (A summary of the responses to the items in this section can be found in Table 2.) In response to clarifying their status relative to working with universities in terms of research and development projects related to ECE, 68% of the SDE did collaborate with universities, 16% did not, 4% abstained, and 12% failed to return the Survey.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Existing research projects related to ECE were reported in 44% of the states. In 40% of the SDE, however, there was no research under way; 4% did not respond to the item; and 12% did not complete the Survey. Research studies were conducted during the past five years by 62% of the SDE; 22% had not conducted any research studies; 4% did not respond to this item; and 12% failed to complete and return the Survey.

The SDE financed attendance at conferences sponsored by professional organizations for 78% of the respondents. For 10% there was no SDE financial support; and 12% did not return their Survey.

Available Accommodations. Funding was allocated to assist local districts in operating ECE programs by 50% of the SDE; 34% did not provide funding; 4% did not answer; and 12% failed to complete and return the Survey. The budget

Table 2 - Personnel Commitment*

| Categories | Responses | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Abstained | Failed to Return Survey |
| Item 2.1 - Curriculum Specialist | 13 | 10 | 1 | 6 |
| Item 2.2 - Course Offerings | 34 | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Item 2.3 - Current Research | 22 | 20 | 2 | 6 |
| Item 2.4 - Past Research | 31 | 11 | 2 | 6 |
| Item 2.5 - Professional Conferences | 39 | 5 | 0 | 6 |

*As reported by number of states

review section of the SDE investigated the budgets of local school districts to ascertain if funding is allocated to purchase materials or facilities to aid in the development of ECE in only 28% of the states. In 54% of the states, local budgets were not reviewed with respect to funding specifically for ECE; 4% abstained; and 12% of the Surveys were not returned. (A summary of the responses to the items in this section may be examined in Table 3.)

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Written curriculum materials were provided to aid public school districts in ECE in 70% of the states. In 16% of the states, however, there were no written materials provided by the SDE; 2% did not respond to this item; and 12% did not return their Survey.

## Analysis of Findings And Discussion

An analysis of the findings of this study indicate there had been an increase in the institutionalization of early childhood education since 1976 (Swick). It also appears, based upon data received, that many states are focusing attention on the preschool years with special attention given to exceptional children and to the area of parent education.

Specific changes that have taken place since 1976 are discussed as follows:

1. Since 1976 there has been an increase in the number of states with guidelines and/or a philosophy for early childhood education.
2. In 1976 only one state had a model program for local schools to use as an example, while in 1980 five states had developed model programs.

Table 3 - Available Accommodations*

| Categories | Responses Yes | No | Abstain | Failed to Return Survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item 3.1 Fund ECE | 25 | 17 | 2 | 6 |
| Item 3.2 - Reviews Local Budgets | 14 | 27 | 3 | 6 |
| Item 3.3 - Written Curriculum Materials | 35 | 8 | 1 | 6 |

*As reported by number of states

3. The number of states conducting evaluations of early childhood programs has increased from 13 in 1976 to 21 in 1980.
4. A significant improvement in state leadership is noted in the area of certification of teachers and child care workers. In 1976 only 8 states had certification laws covering early childhood education. In 1980, 30 states reported having such laws.
5. While state departments have increased their involvement in providing local schools with curriculum specialists in early childhood (from 24 in 1976 to 33 in 1980) these is still a need to expand this effect.
6. State leaders also indicated they are increasing their involvement with colleges and universities in terms of planning courses of study and in the development and/or improvement of teacher education programs.
7. A major improvement in the states is their committment to funding local early childhood programs. In 1976, 11 states provided direct funding and in 1980, 25 states are doing so. However, only 14 states are monitoring the use of these funds.
8. An increase in the number of states (from 26 in 1976 to 35 in 1980) providing local programs with written curriculum materials is an encouraging sign.

In summary, it is apparent that many state departments of education have made progress in furthering their involvement in developing quality early childhood programs for children and parents. Specific gains have been made in the areas of curriculum guidelines, certification of personnel, evaluation of local programs, financing of programs, dissemination of written curriculum materials, and institutionalization of early childhood programs through the development of divisions and/or departments within the state office administrative structure. Areas which state level leadership needs to address

include the development of model programs for local districts to use, further attention on conducting research in early childhood education, and more systematic methods of monitoring the use of funds allocated for early childhood programs.

In comparison to the status of state leadership in early childhood in 1976, the current (1980) picture is more stable and cohesive. This appears to have happened due to increased concern by school leaders with the preschool years, more attention being focused on parenting, and the recognition of the needs of exceptional children during their early development. The challenge for state leadership teams during the 1980's is two-fold: (1) to maintain the gains made, and (2) to further develop a logical basis for assisting parents and children during the formative years of life.

References

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. The Ecology of Human Development. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Gotts, Edward. "Long-Term Effects of A Home-Oriented Preschool Program," Childhood Education, 56 (February/March, 1980), 228-234.

Lazar, Irving. Summary: The Persistence of Preschool Effects (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977).

Swick, Kevin J. "Needed: More State Leadership in Preschool Education," Education Report 9 (December, 1976), 1-3.